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February 18, 1955

Dr. Leo Szilard
University of Chicago
Chicago 37, Illinois

Dear Szilard:

I saw your letter in the N.Y. Times a few weeks ago, and I must say that I shared your pessimism about the course of coming events. At the time, I must admit too that I thought your proposal that the savants of the universities address themselves more coherently to the problem of world peace was naive; I must have been thinking subconsciously about it since then, your proposal now seems merely deperate.

I am sure that there is nothing in desperation or otherwise that I can individually do to help, but I did want to offer you my moral support. Can you do something of the same in return? I have talked to a few people here at Madison about it, and we agreed we should like to hear more from you on the matter. That is, I think that Madison and this university might be fertile ground for your proposal, and I say this in hopes of attracting you to visit us to elaborate on it. Do you think you might have the time to spend a day or two here, and if so, when would be convenient for you?

This, so far, is purely unofficial, and if you wanted to limit your visit to an entirely informal one, with individual discussion and perhaps a group luncheon with the local F.A.S., that could be arranged with hardly more than an affirmative nod from you. If it would interest you to give a more formal lecture, on any relevant topic, I am sure this could be readily arranged, though it might take a little longer to clear the finances. It goes without saying that we will meet your expenses, whether personally or officially.

Frankly, it hardly seems likely that any solution is to be discovered; if this is taken as a fact, perhaps it raises its own questions in turn, whether there would be anything left to salvage, would it be worth it, could this be helped. But however futile these efforts, they might be a contractive catharsis in contrast with the neurotogenic load we all carry of repressed not-thinking about the H-bomb, and so might have their immediate benefits too.

Do let me hear from you, and I hope favorably on your visit.

P.S. Have you any copies of your letter. I am sorry I forgot to clip it and would like to have one or more to show around, (which must have been your purpose in writing it).

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg